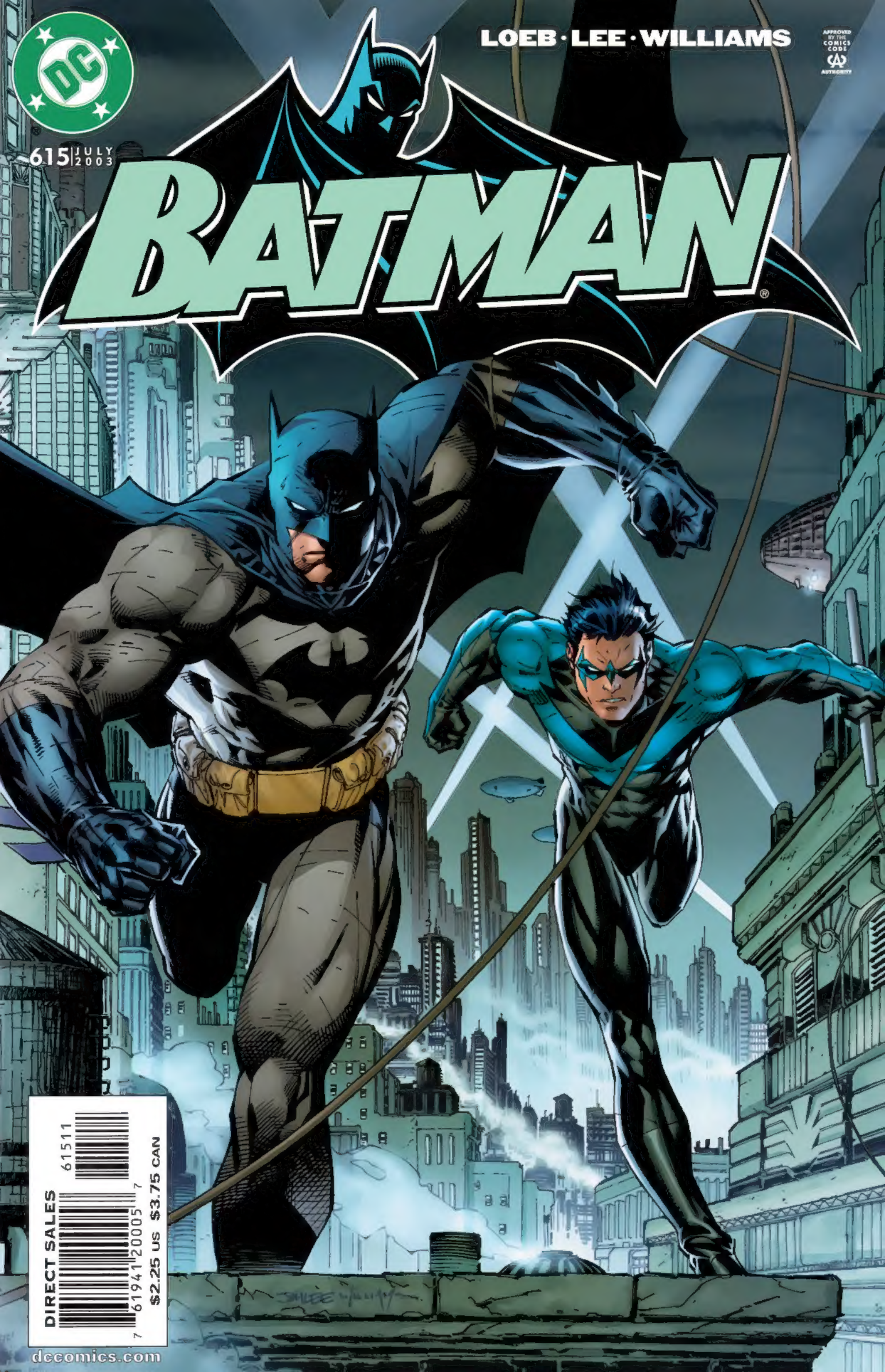
LOEB · LEE · WILLIAMS
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615 JULY 2003
BATMAN
DIRECT SALES
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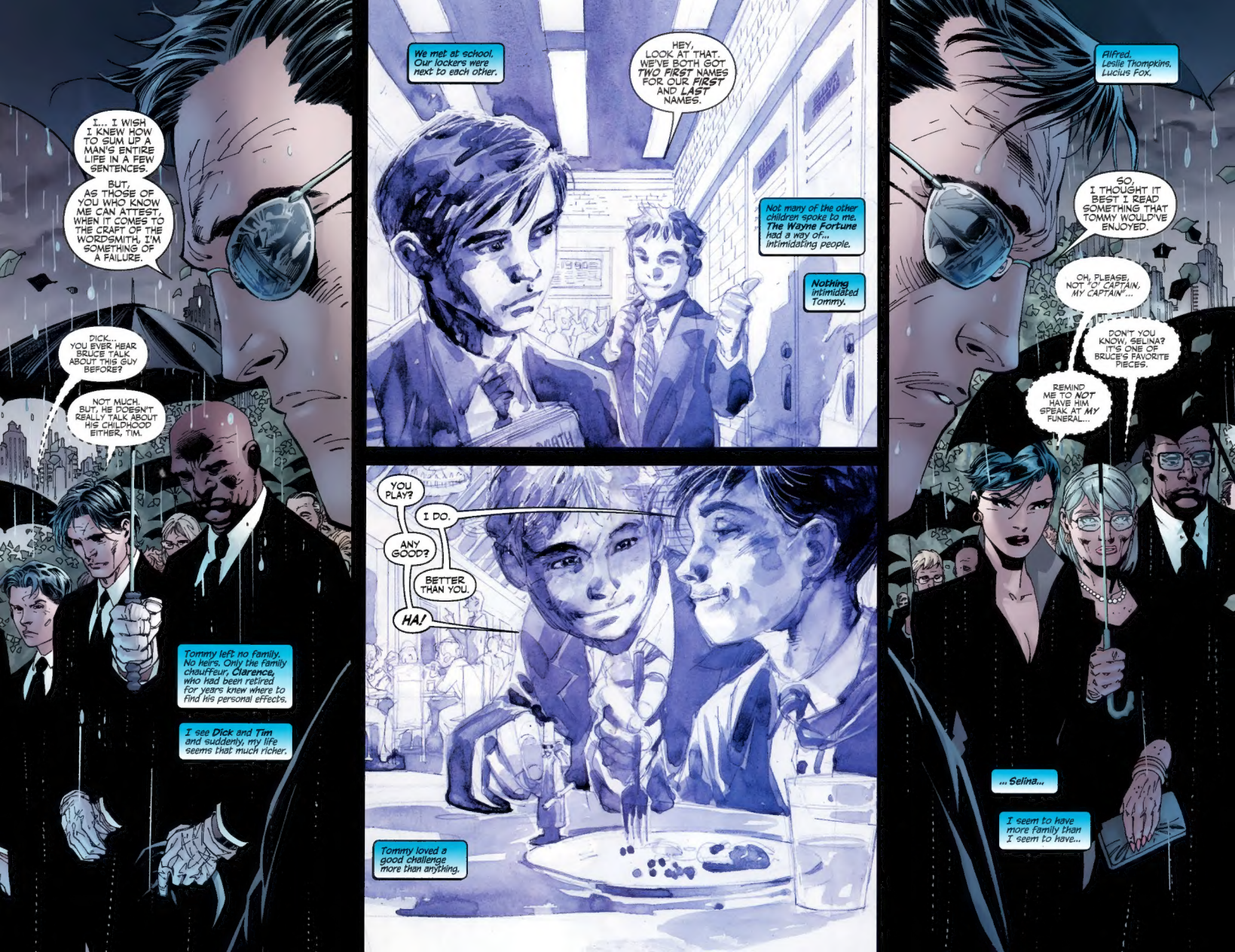
Tommy Elliot is dead.
WE LIVE IN A VIOLENT WORLD.
I went to my first funeral at the age of ten.
As kids, to our parents' horror, Tommy and I would play hide and seek among the gravestones.
His father... and later, his mother are both buried here as well.
DOCTOR THOMAS ELLIOT USED HIS SKILLS AS A SURGEON TO SAVE THE LIVES THAT OTHERS WOULD HAVE TAKEN AWAY.
UNFORTUNATELY, THERE WAS NO ONE SKILLED ENOUGH TO SAVE HIM.
Despite spending most of his adulthood in Philadelphia, he left instructions that he be laid to rest here, next to his parents.
In The Gotham City Cemetery.


I... I WISH I KNEW HOW TO SUM UP A MAN'S ENTIRE LIFE IN A FEW SENTENCES.
BUT, AS THOSE OF YOU WHO KNOW ME CAN ATTEST, WHEN IT COMES TO THE CRAFT OF THE WORDSMITH, I'M SOMETHING OF A FAILURE.
DICK... YOU EVER HEAR BRUCE TALK ABOUT THIS GUY BEFORE?
NOT MUCH. BUT, HE DOESN'T REALLY TALK ABOUT HIS CHILDHOOD EITHER, TIM.
Tommy left no family. No heirs. Only the family chauffeur, Clarence, who had been retired for years knew where to find his personal effects.
I see Dick and Tim and suddenly, my life seems that much richer.
We met at school. Our lockers were next to each other.
HEY, LOOK AT THAT. WE'VE BOTH GOT TWO FIRST NAMES FOR OUR FIRST AND LAST NAMES.
Not many of the other children spoke to me. The Wayne Fortune had a way of... intimidating people.
Nothing intimidated Tommy.
YOU PLAY?
I DO.
ANY GOOD?
BETTER THAN YOU.
HA!
Tommy loved a good challenge more than anything.
Alfred. Leslie Thompkins. Lucius Fox.
SO, I THOUGHT IT BEST I READ SOMETHING THAT TOMMY WOULD'VE ENJOYED.
OH, PLEASE, NOT "O, CAPTAIN, MY CAPTAIN"...
DON'T YOU KNOW, SELINA? IT'S ONE OF BRUCE'S FAVORITE PIECES.
REMIND ME TO NOT HAVE HIM SPEAK AT MY FUNERAL...
... Selina...
I seem to have more family than I seem to have...

"O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN! OUR FEARFUL TRIP IS DONE. THE SHIP HAS WEATHER'D EVERY RACK, THE PRIZE WE SOUGHT IS WON.
I was living in Paris when Tommy graduated from medical school.
Alfred got word to me that he had wanted to follow in my father's footsteps and become the world's greatest surgeon...
...and I was in Japan when Alfred sent me a telegram telling me Tommy's mother had died of cancer.
I meant -- I always meant to get back to see him. But... my life had changed by then.
"EXULT O SHORES, AND RING O BELLS! BUT I WITH MOURNFUL TREAD, WALK THE DECK MY CAPTAIN LIES, FALLEN COLD AND DEAD."

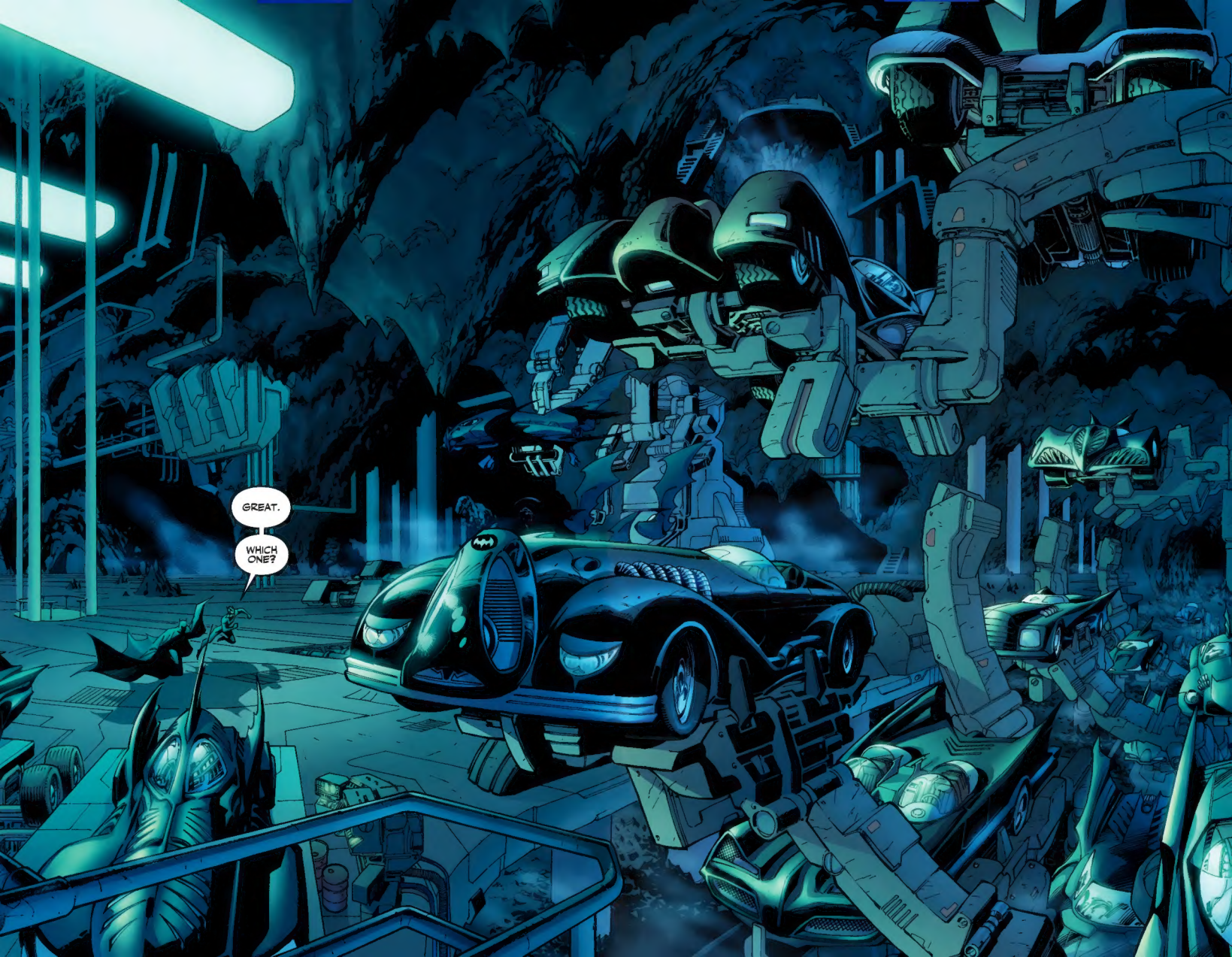
HUSH
Chapter Eight
THE DEAD
Jeph LOEB writes
Jim LEE pencils
I have been to too many funerals.
SLEEP WELL, TOMMY...
THOMAS ELLIOT
Scott WILLIAMS inks
Richard STARKINGS letters
Alex SINCLAIR colors
Bob SCHRECK edits
Michael WRIGHT associate edits
special thanks to Mark CHIARELLO
I made a promise on the grave of my parents to rid this city of the evil that took their lives. By day, I am Bruce Wayne, billionaire philanthropist. At night, criminals, a cowardly and superstitious lot, call me...
BATMAN
CREATED BY BOB KANE

The cave.
I have been awake for fifty-six hours.
Subject analysis. Elliot, Thomas. Cause of death, heart failure due to rupture of the aortic valve and left ventricle.
Ballistic report indicates the bullet was fired from a 9mm Glock, standard issue Gotham City Police Department firearm.
Subject's blood flooded into the lungs --
-- Joker, identity unknown -- charged with the murder, being held at Arkham Asylum for observation.
-- Cause of death, heart failure due to rupture of the aortic valve --
-- Joker, identity unknown --
As with everything, the answer lies somewhere in the details...

-- analysis, Elliot, Thomas. Cause of death, heart failure due to rupture --
BRUCE...?
HELLO? I'VE BEEN TALKING TO YOU FOR ABOUT TEN MINUTES.
I HAVE BEEN LISTENING.
-- Joker, identity unknown --
DO YOU THINK YOU COULD TURN THAT THING OFF FOR A COUPLE OF MINUTES SO WE CAN TALK --
-- WHICH REQUIRES YOU DOING MORE THAN LISTENING?
COMPUTER, "AUDIO AND VISUAL OFF."
-- Gotham City Police Depart-- Audio and visual OFF.
YOU'VE GOT TWO MINUTES, DICK.
AND WHILE I APPRECIATE YOUR CONCERN FOR MY WELL-BEING --
IT'S NOT JUST ME. ALFRED. BARBARA. TIM --
GIVEN THAT I'VE LOST A FRIEND -- A GOOD FRIEND -- EVEN THOUGH WE HADN'T SEEN EACH OTHER FOR A LONG TIME --
-- HEY, GIVEN YOUR USUAL GRIM AND MOODY SELF, YOU'RE BEING A BOX OF CHOCOLATES.
BUT, YOU CAUGHT THE BAD GUY.
THE JOKER'S BACK IN ARKHAM FOR LIKE THE SEVENTY-NINTH TIME --
-- WHERE MAYBE WE CAN HOLD ONTO HIM FOR MORE THAN AN HOUR AND A HALF THIS TIME...
THE JOKER DIDN'T KILL TOMMY.

WHOA.
WAIT.
BACK UP.
YOU WERE THERE.
I SAW WHAT I WAS MEANT TO SEE.
HEARD WHAT I WAS MEANT TO HEAR.
A GUNSHOT.
TOMMY'S BODY LYING DEAD WITH A BULLET THROUGH HIS HEART.
THE JOKER HOLDING A SMOKING GUN.
BUT, AS I SAID, THE JOKER DIDN'T KILL TOMMY.
THEN...WHO?
COMPUTER, "TRACK VISUAL TO MY VOICE."
Confirmed.
IT INVOLVES THE MANIPULATION OF KILLER CROC, CATWOMAN, POISON IVY AND HARLEY QUINN.
IT REACHES AS HIGH AS SUPERMAN.
AND AS LOW AS THE JOKER.
IT'S SOMEONE NEW.
OR SOMEONE OLD TRYING SOMETHING NEW.
THAT NARROWS IT DOWN TO, SAY, HALF THE CRIMINAL POPULATION OF GOTHAM CITY.
IF DETECTIVE WORK WERE EASY --
-- EVERYONE WOULD BE DOING IT.
WAS THAT... HUMOR?
NOW, I AM WORRIED ABOUT YOU.
IT EVEN GOT TO ME.
I ALMOST KILLED THE JOKER.
...I HONESTLY WANTED TO...

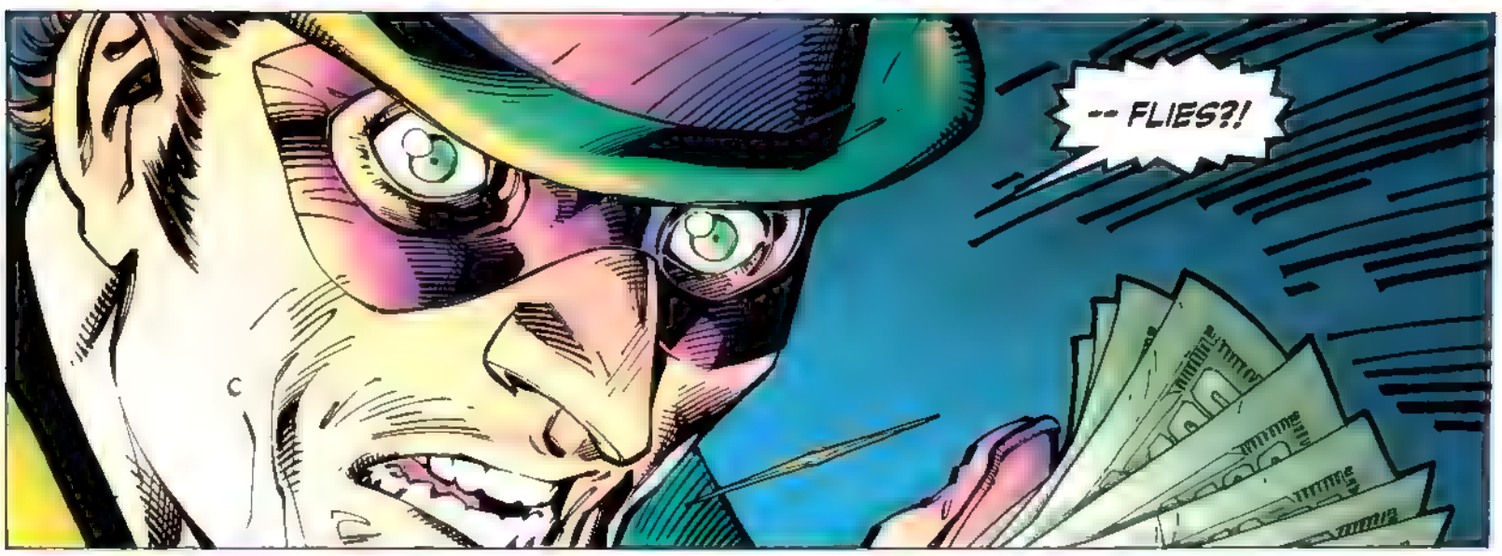
BRUCE...
WITHOUT SOUNDING TRITE --
-- WHATEVER YOUR IMPULSE WAS, YOU DIDN'T ACT ON IT.
WHOEVER IS DOING THIS, YOU'LL GET THEM.
GUYS?
YES, ORACLE...?
IF YOU'RE ALL THROUGH WITH THE MALE BONDING...
DOES SHE HAVE TO LISTEN TO EVERYTHING?
YOU'D KNOW BETTER THAN I WOULD.
I HEARD THAT!
SO, IF EITHER OF YOU IS INTERESTED, THE RIDDLER JUST HIJACKED AN ARMORED CAR WITH ELEVEN MILLION IN CASH ONBOARD.
HE LEFT A NOTE.
"WHAT IS IT THAT HAS FOUR WHEELS, COSTS ELEVEN MILLION DOLLARS, AND FLIES?"
THE NIGHT AIR MIGHT CLEAR YOUR HEAD.
...
LET'S TAKE THE CAR.


GREAT.
WHICH ONE?

THROOOM
SO.
WORD UNDER THE STREET IS YOU'RE SEEING CATWOMAN.
ANY TRUTH IN THAT?
GOTHAM CITY
14 MILES
SKREEEEEEE
HONK HONK
PARK
EXIT A STREET
APARO EXPRESSWAY
I TAKE IT BY YOUR SILENCE...
...IT IS TRUE!
Dick always spoke to me without fear. No matter what else has happened to us through the years --
-- he has earned that right.

LOOK, THIS MAY BE NONE OF MY DAMN BUSINESS.
AND I KNOW YOU *THINK* I'M *AGAINST* YOU GOING OUT WITH A FORMER...
...KNOWN...
...*THIEF*, OR WHATEVER SHE IS...
...*WAS*.
ANYWAY, I'M NOT.
AGAINST IT.
BRUCE, I'VE KNOWN YOU TOO LONG.
I CAME DOWN TO THE CAVE *EXPECTING* TO FIND YOU DRAPED IN SHADOWS.
CUT OFF FROM EVERYONE -- INCLUDING YOURSELF.
YOU LOST AN OLD FRIEND. I GET IT.
BUT -- THERE'S SOMETHING *DIFFERENT* ABOUT YOU.
GOOD DIFFERENT.
IF SHE MAKES YOU HAPPY -- *GREAT. EXCEPT* -- EVERY RELATIONSHIP YOU'VE EVER HAD WITH A WOMAN --
-- EITHER AS *BRUCE* OR *BATMAN* --
-- HAS GOTTEN *SCREWED UP* BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T TELL HER ABOUT YOUR BEING...
...EITHER *BATMAN* OR *BRUCE*.
MY POINT IS --
TELL HER.
HELL, YOU'VE KNOWN EACH OTHER SO LONG, SHE PROBABLY *ALREADY KNOWS.*
YOU'RE RIGHT.
REALLY...?
IT *IS* NONE OF YOUR DAMN BUSINESS.
OKAY, THE RIDDLER JUST PASSED THE *DENNY'S* ON ADAMS. IF YOU TURN LEFT ON SECOND AVENUE...
SKREEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE

WELL, BOYS, HAVE YOU FIGURED OUT WHAT'S GOT FOUR WHEELS, COSTS ELEVEN MILLION DOLLARS, AND --


-- FLIES?!

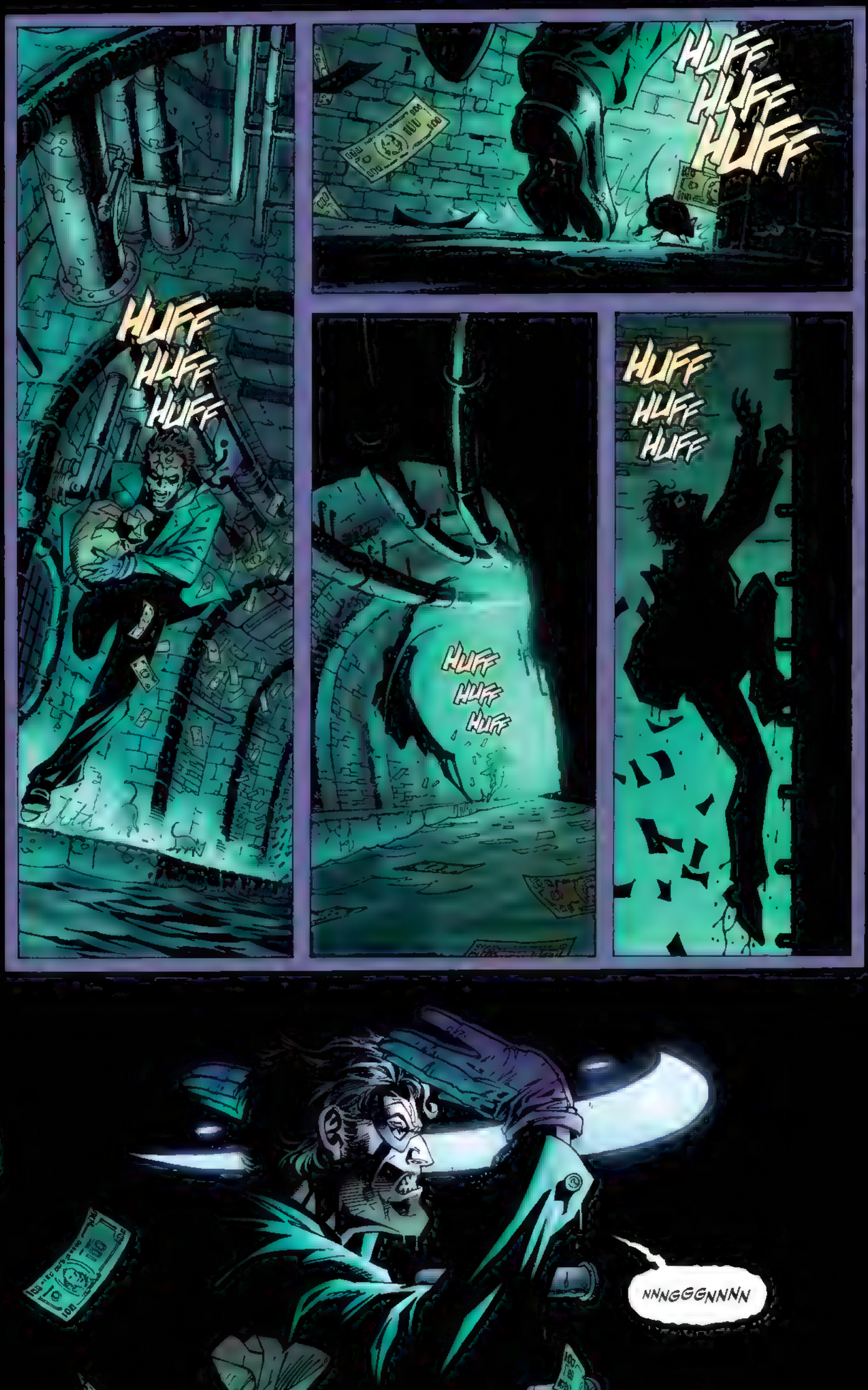
Battering Ram ENGAGED.
LISTEN, BRUCE, IF YOU DO DECIDE TO HAVE THAT CONVERSATION WITH HER...?
YOU MIGHT WANT TO SHAVE FIRST.

BADA-BOOM
The first person I ever revealed my identity to was Dick Grayson.
He was about the same age I was when my parents were killed.
His parents -- circus acrobats -- had been murdered.
And I... wanted to make a difference in his life...
TOK
DOK
The way, if my parents had lived, they would have made a difference in mine...

Through the years, I've debated whether or not it was fair of me to take him in.
Train him.
Give him another identity to hide behind.

But, I've learned that Dick wasn't like me.
He didn't come from a world of privilege.
He was a performer. Gifted in that way.

And while, at the time, the transition from Robin to Nightwing was... difficult for us both --
-- it was a day I had long prepared myself for because...
...Dick was born to be in the center ring...


HUFF HUFF HUFF
HUFF HUFF HUFF
HUFF HUFF HUFF
HUFF HUFF HUFF
NNNGGGNNNN

I think about Edward Nigma and the life he has had as The Riddler.
Where once his obsessive need to leave riddles as clues would confound me...
...everything about him has become routine.
A SOLID GOLD GARBAGE TRUCK...
I half-expected him to have retired by now.
HA.
HA-HA-HA-HA!
ER.

Someone has taken the time to infiltrate the lives of Poison Ivy, Killer Croc, Harley Quinn...
...even The Joker.
And yet, The Riddler has apparently been ignored.
NEED ANY HELP WITH THAT?
NO. I'VE GOT IT.
An armored car robbery -- even with eleven million in cash -- is exactly the sort of crime The Riddler has always taken on.
And the riddle, by his standards, was amateurish...
Why was he ignored? Was he somehow undeserving?
Activating ultraviolet.
Or...knowingly or otherwise... was he himself intended to be the riddle?
ANYTHING?
MAYBE. I'VE SEEN THIS SUBSTANCE BEFORE.
ASH.
FROM THE LAZARUS PIT...
As with everything, the answer lies somewhere in the details...

ARKHAM ASYLUM

GOTHAM CITY ZOO: CAT HOUSE
MCMCCCIX

WHAT IS THIS, A JOKE? I DON'T KNOW YOU.
DO I?
I'M YOUR ATTORNEY. YOU'RE FREE ON BAIL, PENDING A HEARING TO GET THE CHARGES DROPPED.
ARKHAM

IT'S NOT LIKE YOU, SEEKING ME OUT.
NOT THAT I'M COMPLAINING, MIND YOU.
A FEW DAYS AGO I BURIED A DEAR FRIEND.
I... I'M SORRY.

HEH. I MAY BE CRAZY, BUT I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE WITH SOME BANDAGE HEAD.
FAIR ENOUGH.

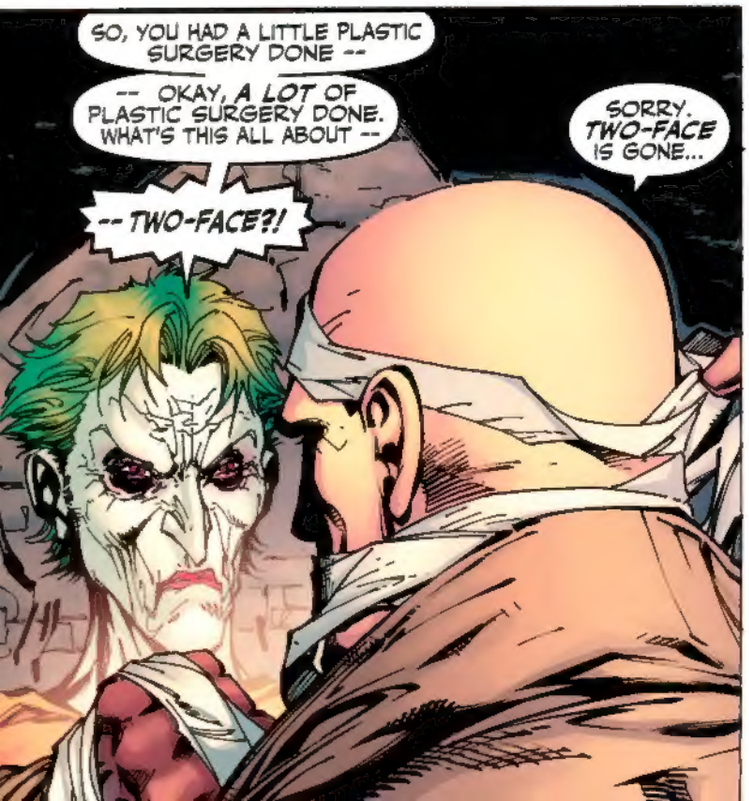
IT'S BEEN SUGGESTED THAT I'M HANDLING IT WELL BECAUSE I HAVE YOU IN MY LIFE.
I HAVE A FAN? IS IT THE LITTLE BIRD OR THE BIGGER ONE?
NIGHTWING.

WAIT A SECOND. I KNOW THAT VOICE.
YOU SHOULD. WE GO WAY BACK.
TO EVEN BEFORE MY... ACCIDENT.

I KNOW WHO YOU ARE, SELINA.
WHERE YOU LIVE. WHAT YOU DO DURING THE DAY.
LIKE YOU, I HAVE TWO LIVES. I WANT YOU TO BE PART OF BOTH OF THEM.

YOU BROKE INTO MY HOME ONE CHRISTMAS.
BEAT ME UP IN FRONT OF MY WIFE.
THIS ISN'T GOING TO TURN OUT TO BE A GOOD SURPRISE, IS IT...

YOU KNOW, FOR A LONER, YOU CERTAINLY HAVE YOURSELF A LOT OF STRINGS.
NIGHTWING. ROBIN. ORACLE. HUNTRESS. BATGIRL.
I JUST DON'T WANT TO BE THE ONE STRING THAT TRIPS YOU UP.
YOU WON'T.


SO, YOU HAD A LITTLE PLASTIC SURGERY DONE --
-- OKAY, A LOT OF PLASTIC SURGERY DONE. WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT --
-- TWO-FACE?!
SORRY. TWO-FACE IS GONE...

BRUCE.

HARVEY DENT IS BACK.
AND I'M GOING TO FINISH THE JOB I SET OUT TO DO AS DISTRICT ATTORNEY WHEN THE LAW WAS ON MY SIDE.
SO... WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?
YOU COULD FIND A RAZOR.
AND A BATH WOULDN'T KILL YOU.
Dick was right.
I should have shaved...
to be continued

DC IN DEMAND

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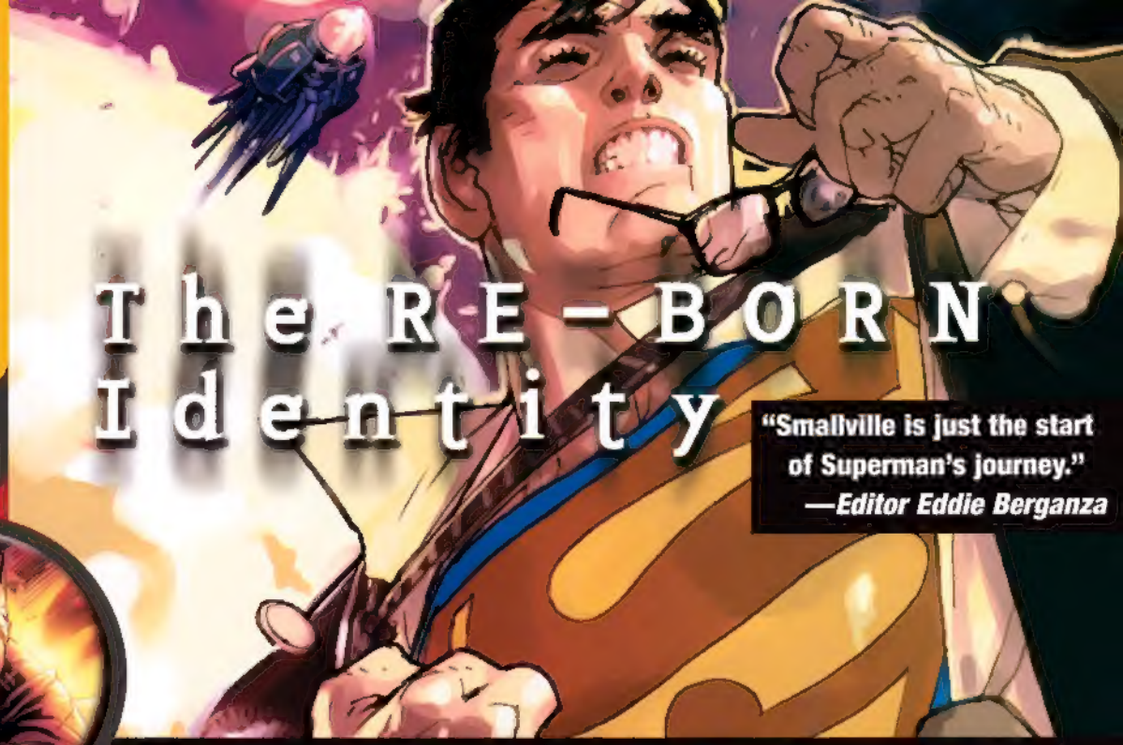
This Month's Cover by...
JIM LEE AND SCOTT WILLIAMS
colored by ALEX SINCLAIR



The RE-BORN Identity

"Smallville is just the start of Superman's journey."
—Editor Eddie Berganza

SUPERMAN BIRTHRIGHT #1 (Summer 2003)

SUPERMAN: BIRTHRIGHT is the miniseries no "Fan of Steel" can miss. **Mark Waid** (EMPIRE, JLA) and **Leinil Yu** (HIGH ROADS) offer a fresh, exciting look as they unveil never-before-seen moments in the early life of Kal-El. What really inspired Clark Kent to put on a costume? What happened on his travels through South Africa? Why was Pa Kent against the idea of "Superman"? All of these questions, and many more, will be answered when you claim your birthright from comics shops this summer!

Next Month in...

Batman #616

Batman's hot on the trail of Hush, a path that takes him head-on with one of his oldest foes: Ra's al Ghul. And when they're done, only one of them is going to walk away! By Loeb, Lee and Williams.

The Hot List THIS MONTH

THE TITANS/YOUNG JUSTICE: GRADUATION DAY #1 OF 3

What fate awaits your favorite young guns when a mysterious conglomerate offers to sponsor the two teams? Will the arrival of an enigmatic cyborg girl from the future bent on destroying both teams end this Graduation Day a bit too prematurely?

JSA: ALL-STARS #1 OF 8

An all-star group of creators has cooked up one twisted tale for the JSA'ers of past and present. What sort of enemy awaits this Justice Society of America that forces each member to face a challenge alone?

ARKHAM ASYLUM: LIVING HELL #1 OF 6

Discover the dark underbelly of Gotham's notorious "House of Madness" in this 6-issue miniseries, and find out why it's never good to plead guilty by reason of insanity in Gotham's Court of Law.

HUMAN DEFENSE CORPS #1 OF 6

Q: Who defends the Earth when the JLA isn't around? A: This 10,000 strong branch of the U.S. Armed Forces, equipped with the most cutting-edge high-tech weaponry possible. Follow a young man's two-year tour of duty with campaigns on Apokolips, the Moon, and in Hell itself!

ANSWERING "BIRDS" CALLS

Having access to Oracle's secret passwords has its advantages. We logged in to her computer and discovered new BIRDS OF PREY personnel are joining the series with issue #56. We're talking about new writer **Gail Simone**, whose covert operations on *Deadpool* and *Agent X* made quite a mark with readers, and **Ed Benes** and **Alex Lei**, whose sexy, stylish art on SUPERGIRL drew raves everywhere. We've also intercepted some ultra-secret e-mails that suggest another heroine will join in the *hunt* this June!

To get more of DC in Demand's Inside Scoop, go to www.dccomics.com/dcindemand right now!

MALL OF JUSTICE?

Hey, we all love the JLA, but honestly—how often do *you* call the moon for help? Fortunately, for problems more down to Earth, **Keith Giffen**, **J.M. DeMatteis** and **Kevin Maguire** rented out space in a mini-mall for "old school" favorites like Booster Gold and Blue Beetle to reunite and save the world one "Bwah-ha-ha" at a time! We dunno what this team'll call itself when their six-issue miniseries bows in July, so for now consider them FORMERLY THE JUSTICE LEAGUE!

CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE KRYPTONIAN KIND

We're confirming reports that superstars **J.M. DeMatteis** (THE SPECTRE) and **Jamie Tolagson** (SUPERGIRL: WINGS) will offer a shocking new account of the DCU's most famous visitation in UFO lore. In fact, SUPERMAN: THE KANSAS SIGHTING will have everyone taken by surprise when they learn the connection between Kal-El's arrival on Earth and a young boy's alien abduction. Look for the two-issue Prestige Format to invade comics shops later this year!

INDIGO GIRL

They sprawled out SUPERMAN'S METROPOLIS, put the bite in BATMAN: NOSFERATU…now we're told writers **Jean-Marc** and **Randy Lofficier** and artist **Ted McKeever** have something even darker in mind for a certain Amazon. In the third installment of their *thrillogy*, a slave named Diana discovers she's more than the main attraction within a *psycho's* palace of sin. Experience the WONDER of a WOMAN's fight for freedom in THE BLUE AMAZON this Fall!

DCCOMICS.COM GETS A BRAND-NEW FACE!

Our Internet fashion experts have been hard at work giving the DC Comics Web site a total makeover. Come see our new face paint at www.dccomics.com. Also in the works—a swanky new message board system for all of you to vent your cheers and jeers on the DCU. Chime in and let us know if we made the "best dressed" list.

– your MOLE at 1700

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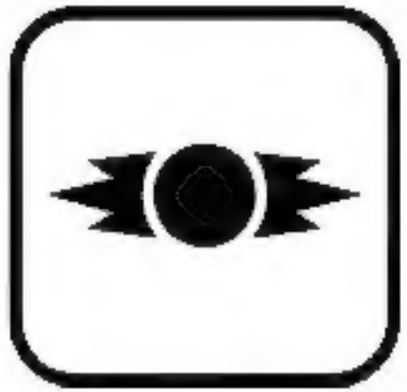

MINUTEMEN
SCANS